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DE RUEHNO #0156/01 1111653
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 211653Z APR 09
FM USMISSION USNATO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2886
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY IMMEDIATE 5315
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA IMMEDIATE
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 6322
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI IMMEDIATE 5746
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN IMMEDIATE 0071
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHNO/USDELMC BRUSSELS BE IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/USNMR SHAPE BE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 000156

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [MOPS](#) [GG](#) [RU](#)
SUBJECT: NATO EXERCISES IN GEORGIA - THE FACTS

Classified By: Ambassador Kurt Volker
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) Summary: This cable provides details of planning and preparation for Exercises Cooperative Longbow and Cooperative Lancer 2009, which are scheduled to take place between May 6 and June 1 near Tbilisi. The information provided shows that Russia was well aware of planning for this exercise in Georgia from its inception, that Russia could have become a participant in this exercise, and that Russian claims that the exercises will have a destabilizing influence are baseless. In a discussion among NATO PermReps on April 21, Allies uniformly rejected Russian assertions that such a long-planned PfP peacekeeping exercise was provocative, and agreed the exercise should go forward as planned. Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer told Ambassador Volker privately that he sees Russian complaints as aimed at testing whether NATO will indeed push back on Russia seeking to assert a sphere of influence over Georgia. End summary.

TIMELINE, RUSSIAN AWARENESS

2.(C) Planning for Exercises Cooperative Longbow and Cooperative Lancer 09 began on July 13, 2007. Georgia offered to host on March 5, 2008 and SHAPE accepted the offer on April 14, 2008. Russia, as a Partnership for Peace (PfP) Partner, was invited to all exercise related events, including the exercise planning conferences. Invitations to all PfP members were sent on July 2, 2008 (Initial Planning Conference), December 4, 2008 (Main Planning Conference), and February 2, 2009 (Final Coordination Conference).

3.(C) The Russia-Georgia crisis in August 2008 led to a change in planning for these exercises. The initial planning conference was to have taken place in Tbilisi from September 23-25, but was moved to Izmir, Turkey from November 17-21, 2008. The Main Planning Conference took place on January 19-23, 2009, and the Final Coordination Conference took place on March 16-19, 2009 in Tbilisi. Several NATO HQs, Georgia, and 13 other Non-NATO and 7 NATO nations participated. At the Final Planning Conference the number of nations attending as full participants was fixed, and all subsequent documents were sent only to those nations participating in the conference.

PURPOSE

4.(C) Both Exercises Longbow and Lancer are aimed at

improving interoperability between NATO and Partner countries. The scenario is based on a UN-mandated NATO-Led Peace Support Operation in support of a UN Security Council Resolution. Cooperative Longbow will be a command post exercise focused on training NATO staff skills and procedures for crisis response operations at the multinational brigade level. Cooperative Lancer will be a field training exercise to train on UN mandated peace-support operations at the battalion level. They will take place at Vaziani training area, 20 kilometers east of Tbilisi.

PARTICIPATION

5.(C) Nineteen nations are scheduled to participate: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, UAE, the UK, Ukraine, and the United States. Contrary to press information, the Kazakh mission to NATO on April 21 briefed the NATO International Staff that Kazakhstan has not/not withdrawn from these exercises. They reported that their latest conversations with Astana indicated that the Ministry of Defense would like to pull out but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to explore the issue further before a decision is made. They also explained that Russia had requested Kazakhstan pull out of the exercise, indicating that Russia had made a similar request of the Armenians.

6.(C) Lists of the total numbers of participants vary, but the best information available to USNATO at present is that Cooperative Longbow will feature 50 Allied personnel, 69 PfP personnel, and 7 from the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), for a total of 126 personnel from contributing nations. Additionally NATO commands will supply 108 staff to the Longbow exercise. Cooperative Lancer will feature 81 Allied personnel, 243 PfP personnel, and 36 from ICI, for a total of 360 personnel from contributing nations. There will be 61 additional NATO staff assigned to Lancer (Note: The NATO International Staff has ordered another count, but we do not know when that figure will be ready. For purposes of comparison, Russia retains over 7,000 troops on Georgian territory in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. End note).

RUSSIAN PROTEST, NATO RESPONSE

7.(C) In response to Russian Ambassador Rogozin's objections to the exercises in the press, NATO Spokesman James Appathurai has already said there are no plans to cancel. On April 20 Appathurai briefed the press that, as far as NATO is concerned, nothing has changed. The meeting of CHODs will take place and Russia is invited, and preparations for the exercise continue. "Russia has been fully informed as a NATO partner of the preparations for this exercise for a year and should recognize that it poses no threat to stability in the region"

8.(C) On April 20 the Secretary General received a letter (which he said was back-dated to April 16th) from Russian Ambassador to NATO Rogozin requesting cancellation of the exercise. Begin Text:

Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to NATO
Brussels

Dear Secretary General,

We have become aware of the fact that NATO is planning to conduct multinational exercises "Cooperative Lancer/Cooperative Longbow" from the 3rd of May till the 3rd of June on the Georgian military base "Vaziani" in the framework of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. We understand that these exercises had been pre-arranged long before the August aggression by Saakashvili against South Ossetia. Nevertheless, I deem it necessary to ask you to cancel the aforementioned exercises.

As is well known, the situation on the border of South Ossetia and Georgia, as in Georgia itself, is far from stable. Any involvement of a third force in the region, especially a military one, would become an additional irritator for the conflicting parties and could incite their inadequate actions. I am primarily referring to the ruling regime in Tbilisi and its opposition. Bearing in mind the emotional tension between the two sides, that could entail human victims.

In this context by conducting its exercises in the conflict zone NATO could well become responsible for, the eventual above-mentioned consequences. It is for these reasons that I am communicating to you my request to cancel the Alliance's exercises "Cooperative Lancer/Cooperative Longbow". End Text.

RUSSIAN NON-PARTICIPATION IN CHODs MEETING, MAY 7

9.(C) On April 21, in a meeting of NATO-Russia Military Representatives, Russia declined an invitation to participate in a May 7 meeting of Chiefs of Defense. While Ambassador Rogozin yesterday in the press linked a possible decision to not participate in the CHODs meeting to a decision by NATO to continue with the PFP exercise, today the Russian MilRep specifically rejected this reason, arguing instead that Moscow wanted to have political re-engagement, particularly the promised NRC Foreign Ministerial, before any decisions were taken on military-to-military cooperation.

10.(C) It is worth noting that Ambassador Rogozin had made similar statements over the last several weeks. On March 27, he was quoted saying that mil-mil contacts could only be resumed after NRC Ambassadorial and Ministerial meetings. USNATO briefed this information to the April 7 meeting of NATO's Political Committee. Following the U.S. briefing, the Lithuanian PermRep asked the Chairman of the Military Committee whether he thought Russia would actually attend the CHODs meeting if invited. When CMC replied in the affirmative, the NAC approved the decision to go ahead with the invitation. It is also worth noting that the Deputy Secretary General summed up the discussion on this issue by saying that he was in favor of "testing" the Russian commitment to re-engagement.

ALLIED REACTIONS

11.(C) PermReps discussed the Russian protests over lunch on April 21. All Allies argued the Russian complaints were baseless, and that Russia had been well aware of the exercise) including its focus on peacekeeping) for some time. Indeed FM Lavrov commented favorably on the 2008 version of the exercise, which was held in Armenia. All Allies agreed the exercise should go forward as planned, and SYG de Hoop Scheffer later told Ambassador Volker that he saw Russian complaints as aimed at testing whether NATO will indeed push back on Russian efforts to assert a sphere of influence over Georgia.

VOLKER